

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**VIRGINIA WIC PROGRAM WILL RECEIVE \$24.5 MILLION PER YEAR
IN REBATES UNDER NEW INFANT FORMULA CONTRACT**

(RICHMOND, Va.)—Beginning July 1, clients of Virginia's Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program will receive a different infant formula. Abbott's Ross Products Division will provide infant formula to Virginia WIC clients after the current five-year contract with Nestlé USA expires June 30. Ross will be the sole source for eligible participants buying infant formula. Under the contract, the Virginia WIC Program will receive slightly more than \$24.5 million per year in rebates on cans of contract formula bought by WIC participants.

Under the Ross Products contract, either Similac Advance or Isomil Advance formulas will be prescribed to WIC Program participants. These infant formulas will be available at any of the 805 WIC-authorized retail stores located throughout Virginia. Approximately 30,200 infants in the Virginia WIC Program use the contract formula monthly. In certain situations, other specialized formulas may be prescribed if they are medically necessary.

In May, WIC officials began giving clients educational materials to help them begin moving their babies to the new formulas. WIC mothers and caregivers received a bookmark that provided a picture and other helpful information about the new contract formulas. They also received easy-to-use information on how to combine formulas in a way that creates a gradual change from the current formula to the Ross products. In June, health care providers received information about the changeover and were given a contact at Ross Products to answer specific product questions. District health officials and clinicians participated in several interactive training sessions to prepare them for the change. Retail stores have received several mailings that address point-of-service issues.

Federal regulations require state WIC Programs to obtain bids for the infant formula contract. Typically, infant formula contracts are for a maximum of five years. When the contract was re-bid in 2005, Ross Products offered the lowest net price after rebate.

The WIC Program's goal is to provide high-quality nutritional care during the critical prenatal, infancy and pre-school periods to help ensure children's ability to learn and excel in school. The Virginia WIC Program provides certain foods to supplement the diets of low-income pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women and to infants and children younger than 5 who are found to be at nutritional risk. The program also provides nutrition education and referrals to other community agencies for services. The program operates through the state's 35 health districts and serves an average of 139,500 participants per month.

To learn more about the Virginia WIC Program visit www.vdh.virginia.gov and click on Healthy Living.